

interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order, said system further comprising a store station linked to said central station for receiving said merchandise order from said central station, said store station including a portable station movable by a user about a product storage space;

D¹ assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the step of requesting identification of product items to be added to the product order and the quantity of each identified product item; and

fulfilling the merchandise order from the product storage space, including the steps of:

compiling a listing of the product items of one or more merchandise orders to be assembled in the product storage space,

identifying the product locations in the product storage space of each of the product items on said listing of product items, and

moving said portable station with the user about the product storage space between the product locations in the product storage space.

D² 21. The method of claim 16 wherein said fulfilling step includes the steps of transmitting to said portable station the identification of the product item to be included in the customer order, requesting from said portable station the identification of the product item picked from said product storage space, scanning a code associated with the product item, and comparing the code of the product item picked from said product storage space to the identification of the product item transmitted to said portable

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station.

~~18~~ 28. The method of claim ~~19~~ wherein the step of fulfilling the merchandise order additionally comprises transmitting one of said person movement instructions and the identification of the product item to said portable station in said product storage space for permitting a user of said portable station to locate a product item in said product storage space.

~~19~~ 29. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment, said method comprising:

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providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order, said system further comprising a store station linked to said central station for receiving said merchandise order from said central station, said store station including a portable station movable by a user about a product storage space;

assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the step of requesting identification of product items to be added to the product order and the quantity of each identified product item; and

fulfilling the merchandise order from the product storage space, including the steps of:

compiling a listing of the product items of one or more merchandise orders to be assembled in the product storage space, and

identifying the product locations in the product storage space of each of the product items on said listing of product items; wherein the step of fulfilling the merchandise order additionally comprises determining a merchandise order fulfillment path

through said product storage space, said order fulfillment path comprising a sequence of person movement instructions between the product locations of product items on said listing of merchandise items.

²⁰₂₀. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment, said method comprising:

D³ providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order, said system further comprising a store station linked to said central station for receiving said merchandise order from said central station, said store station including a portable station movable by a user about a product storage space;

assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the step of requesting identification of product items to be added to the product order and the quantity of each identified product item; and

fulfilling the merchandise order from the product storage space, including the steps of:

compiling a listing of the product items of one or more merchandise orders to be assembled in the product storage space, and

identifying the product locations in the product storage space of each of the product items on said listing of product items;

wherein the step of fulfilling the merchandise order additionally comprises transmitting one of said person movement instructions and a product item identity to said portable station in said product storage space for permitting a user of said portable station to locate a product item in said product

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storage space; and determining a merchandise order fulfillment path through said product storage space, said order fulfillment path comprising a sequence of person movement instructions between the product locations of product items on said listing of merchandise items.

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40. A method of merchandise ordering, said method comprising:
providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order; and
interactively assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:
requesting from a customer, by spoken word generated by said central station, a product identification of a product item and a quantity of the product item to be added to the merchandise order;
providing the customer with an option to respond, according to the customer's preference, with a requested product identification in spoken words and an option to respond with a requested product identification in DTMF-encoded signals;
receiving the requested product identification and a requested product quantity from a customer by said central station;
and
confirming, by spoken word generated by said central station, the identity and quantity of the product item to be included in the merchandise order.

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51. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment, said method comprising: F

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providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order; and

assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:

requesting from a customer a product identification of a product item and a quantity of the product item to be added to the merchandise order;

providing the customer with an option to respond, according to the customer's preference, with a requested product identification in spoken words and an option to respond with a requested product identification in DTMF-encoded signals;

receiving the requested product identification and a requested product quantity from a customer; and

confirming the identity and quantity of the product item to be included in the merchandise order;

determining if the customer has an unfulfilled merchandise order by checking an unfulfilled merchandise orders database; and

if an unfulfilled merchandise order is present on said unfulfilled merchandise orders database, inquiring whether the customer desires a listing of the product items in the unfulfilled merchandise order, and if a positive response is received from the customer, reciting a listing of product items of the unfulfilled merchandise order.

30 54. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment, said method comprising:

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providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a

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merchandise order; and
assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:
requesting from a customer a product identification of a
product item and a quantity of the product item to be
added to the merchandise order;
providing the customer with an option to respond, according to
the customer's preference, with a requested product
identification in spoken words and an option to respond
with a requested product identification in DTMF-
encoded signals;
receiving the requested product identification and a requested
product quantity from a customer;
confirming the identity and quantity of the product item to be
included in the merchandise order; and
comparing the requested product quantity of a product item in
a merchandise order to a predetermined limit quantity
established for said product item and, if the requested
quantity exceeds said predetermined limit quantity,
reciting the requested product quantity of the product
item to the customer and requesting confirmation from
the customer of the requested product quantity of the
product item.

55. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment,
said method comprising:
providing an order processing system comprising a central station
interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be
accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a
merchandise order; and
assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:
requesting from a customer a product identification of a

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product item and a quantity of the product item to be added to the merchandise order;
providing the customer with an option to respond, according to the customer's preference, with a requested product identification in spoken words and an option to respond with a requested product identification in DTMF-encoded signals;
receiving the requested product identification and a requested product quantity from a customer; and
confirming the identity and quantity of the product item to be included in the merchandise order;
selecting the merchandise order transfer characteristics for effecting the transfer to the customer of the product items of the merchandise order, including choosing between the options of delivery of the product items to the customer and pickup of the product items by the customer, and picking the date and time of the transfer of the merchandise order.

56. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment, said method comprising:
providing an order processing system comprising a central station interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a merchandise order;
assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:
requesting from a customer a product identification of a product item and a quantity of the product item to be added to the merchandise order;
providing the customer with an option to respond, according to the customer's preference, with a requested product identification in spoken words and an option to respond

with a requested product identification in DTMF-
encoded signals;
receiving the requested product identification and a requested
product quantity from a customer;
confirming the identity and quantity of the product item to be
included in the merchandise order; and
inquiring whether the customer wishes to hear a recitation of
product items on which there is a special offer, and if a
response from the customer is positive, reciting a listing of
any special offer product items.

57. A method of merchandise ordering and order fulfillment,
said method comprising:

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D providing an order processing system comprising a central station
interfaced to a telephone communication network so as to be
accessible to customers by telephone for creation of a
merchandise order, said order processing system including a
store station linked to said central station for receiving said
merchandise order from said central station, said store station
including a portable station movable by a user about a product
storage space;

assembling a customer order for fulfillment, including the steps of:

requesting from a customer a product identification of a
product item and a quantity of the product item to be
added to the merchandise order;

providing the customer with an option to respond, according to
the customer's preference, with a requested product
identification in spoken words and an option to respond
with a requested product identification in DTMF-
encoded signals;

receiving the requested product identification and a requested

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product quantity from a customer;
confirming the identity and quantity of the product item to be
included in the merchandise order; and
transmitting a record of the merchandise order to a store station for
requesting payment for the merchandise order.
